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OMAHA'S EMPLOYMENT RECORD: A COMPARISON WITH OTHER PLAINS CITIES

The announcement of the relocation of InterNorth's corporate headquarters from Omaha has caused concern about the area's employment picture. This event is not without precedence. For example, Omaha adjusted to substantial changes in the meatpacking industry in the 1950s and 1960s. Although there are immediate adverse effects of such events, it is instructive to take a longer-run view of Omaha's employment record to assess the current situation.

This article will examine the change in Omaha's nonagricultural employment between 1972 and 1985. This record will be compared to other large cities in the Plains region. The analysis will separate and measure three determinants of Omaha's employment change: overall employment growth in the Plains region, Omaha's industry mix, and Omaha's share of regional employment.

DATA

The employment data used here are from an ongoing Bureau of Labor Statistics survey of establishments. This series does not measure employment for the agricultural sector and, as a result, the agricultural sector is not included in the following analysis. Industry data were available for nine of the ten largest Plains cities from 1972 to 1985. These include Davenport, Des Moines, Kansas City, Lincoln, Minneapolis, Omaha, St. Louis, Springfield, and Wichita. Data for the remaining city, Duluth, were not available until 1975, so it was omitted. The employment data refer to each city's metropolitan statistical area, which generally consists of the county containing the identified city and heavily populated adjacent counties. The nine areas as a group are referred to as Plains cities throughout the article. Prior to 1972, employment data were not available for several of the cities examined here, so 1972 was selected as the beginning year of the analysis.

EMPLOYMENT GROWTH

Between 1972 and 1985, Omaha's employment increased 30.2 percent, which was just less than the 31.8 percent growth for the nine Plains cities and the 32.6 percent U.S. rate. Nebraska's total employment grew 25.8 percent during this same period. Figure 1 shows the employment record for each of the Plains cities in the study. The figure allows a comparison of the employment trends among cities and also provides a comparison of the relative sizes of the cities in terms of employment.

Between 1972 and 1985, Springfield showed the largest percent increase in employment (49.5 percent), followed by Minneapolis (46.6 percent) and Wichita (42 percent). Des Moines, Kansas City, Lincoln, and Omaha each increased employment

between 30 and 34 percent. St. Louis and Davenport showed the slowest gains of 18.3 percent and 11.9 percent respectively.

Minneapolis and St. Louis are the two largest Plains cities, accounting for more than half of the employment in the nine cities examined. As shown in Figure 1, their employment trends during the period display a striking contrast. Minneapolis began the period well below St. Louis in terms of employment. Because of the sharp difference in growth rates, 1985 employment in Minneapolis exceeded that in St. Louis by 149,000 workers.

Figure 1 displays the unevenness in employment, with the downturn from 1980 to 1982 and subsequent sharp gains standing out. This can be seen more clearly in Figure 2, which shows the actual annual growth rates. The first bar indicates the annual employment growth for the U.S., while the second and third bars refer to the nine cities combined and Omaha respectively.

Figure 2 shows three distinct periods. Omaha's annual employment growth between 1973 and 1975 was slightly better than that for the Plains cities. This was followed by three years where Omaha's employment lagged behind the average for the Plains cities. Omaha's employment growth has bettered the Plains

FIGURE 1
Total Nonagricultural Employment

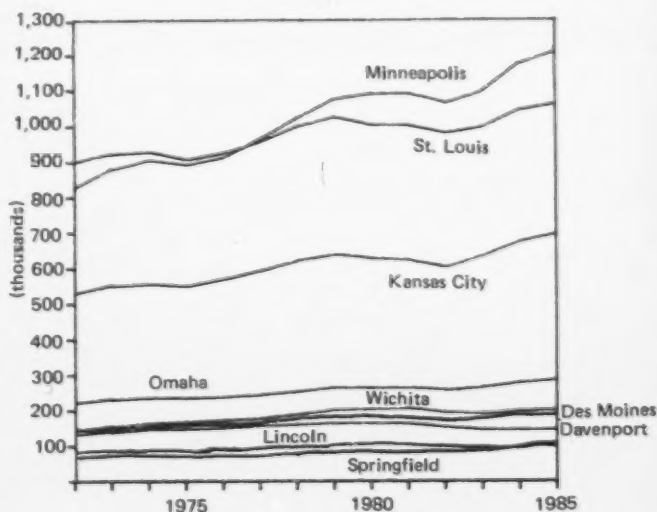
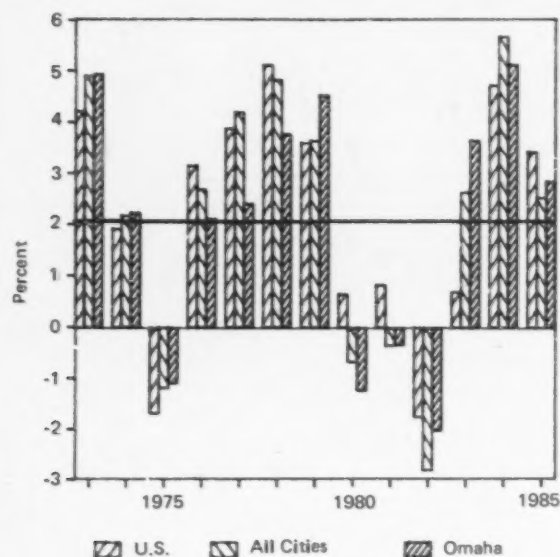


FIGURE 2

Annual Percent Change in Total Nonagricultural Employment



cities record in four of the last five years. Omaha's 1984 gain of more than five percent exceeded any of its other gains for the period examined, but fell short of the Plains cities gain, which was also highest for the period examined. Its gains for the last three years well exceeded its annual average growth of just over two percent (shown by the horizontal line).

As mentioned earlier, Omaha's employment grew slightly slower than the Plains cities between 1973 and 1985. As a result, Omaha's share of Plains employment declined. Omaha's favorable recent performance, however, should be kept in mind when interpreting these results and assessing Omaha's current situation.

INDUSTRY GROWTH

Table 1 shows 1985 industry employment levels and growth between 1972 and 1985 for each of the geographic areas included in the study.* The first column refers to total employment, while the breakdown by industry is shown in the remaining columns. Looking at the all cities row of the table, we see the previously reported 31.8 percent increase in employment. The 74.6 percent growth in the service sector more than doubled this rate and was by far the largest. The finance, insurance, and real estate sector (52 percent), as well as the trade sector (39.5 percent), also exceeded the total employment gain. A similar result is found for U.S. employment growth in these sectors, as shown in the last row of Table 1.

Omaha's 1985 industry employment levels are shown in Table 1, while the levels for the entire 1972 to 1985 period are graphed in Figure 3. Rapid increase in the service sector is the dominant feature in Figure 3. Employment in services was more than 13,000 workers below the trade sector's employment in 1972. By 1985, however, the service sector surpassed trade to become the largest Omaha industry. This occurred even though the trade sector posted substantial gains. The sharp growth in the finance,

insurance, and real estate industry is another noticeable feature of Figure 2, as is the decline in manufacturing.

Omaha's growth in the service sector (76.2 percent) was more than two and one-half times its total employment growth rate (30.2 percent), while growth in finance, insurance, and real estate (55.2 percent) also far exceeded its overall rate. Omaha's employment gain in trade (29.6 percent), however, was slightly under its total growth rate. Manufacturing employment showed the smallest sector gain over the period, with a 1.9 percent jump in the Plains cities between 1972 and 1985, a 1.4 percent increase in the U.S., and an actual decline of 10.6 percent in Omaha.

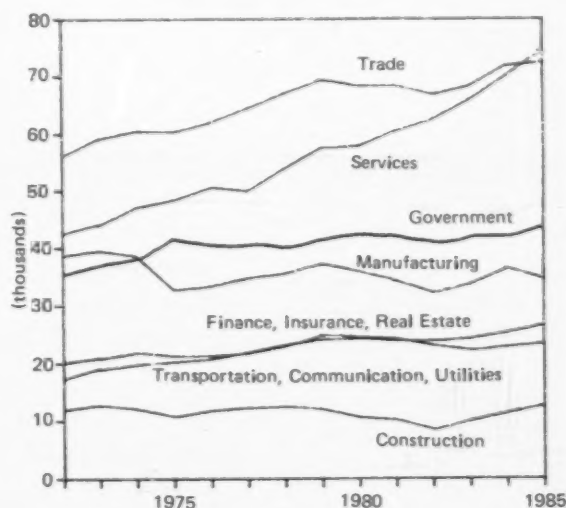
INDUSTRY MIX

We can use the above results partially to assess Omaha's employment situation relative to other Plains cities or the U.S. by addressing the following question: Do the fastest growing industries (i.e., services; finance, insurance, and real estate; and trade) make up a relatively large share of Omaha's employment compared to that of the Plains cities?

If the fastest growing sectors make up a relatively large share of Omaha's total employment compared to the other Plains cities, then as long as the sector growth trends continue, Omaha will be relatively better off. Although not shown in Table 1, sector shares can be computed from the information provided. The service sector's share of Omaha's total employment is 25.9 percent, compared to 23.4 percent for all Plains cities, and 22.4 percent for the U.S. Similarly, Omaha's trade sector accounts for 25.1 percent of its employment, which just exceeds the Plains cities trade share of 25 percent and the U.S. trade share of 23.7 percent. The finance, insurance, and real estate sector makes up 9.2 percent of Omaha's employment, 7.1 percent of Plains cities employment, and 6.1 percent of U.S. employment. The slowest growing sector, manufacturing, makes up 11.9 percent of Omaha's employment,

FIGURE 3

Omaha Employment by Sector



*Due to its small size, the Bureau of Labor Statistics combines employment in the mining sector with the service sector for some cities and with the construction sector for other cities.

TABLE 1
1985 Employment by Sector
(in thousands)
Percent Change 1972 to 1985 Shown in Parentheses

	Total Nonagricultural	Construction	Manufacturing	Transportation, Communication, Utilities	Trade	Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	Services	Government
Davenport	147.9 (11.9)	4.6 (-23.3)	32.1 (-24.1)	8.1 (14.1)	40.8 (32.0)	7.3 (30.4)	28.2 (54.9)	26.9 (21.2)
Des Moines	192.3 (33.2)	7.7 (6.9)	22.6 (-13.1)	12.4 (22.8)	50.5 (43.1)	24.7 (56.3)	45.8 (72.8)	28.7 (22.1)
Kansas City	698.3 (31.9)	31.0 (14.4)	119.4 (-0.2)	53.0 (5.8)	184.3 (40.8)	51.8 (52.4)	154.6 (70.3)	103.8 (36.0)
Lincoln	104.7 (31.7)	3.9 (2.6)	12.9 (8.4)	6.0 (13.2)	24.0 (42.9)	7.6 (33.3)	21.1 (66.1)	29.2 (25.9)
Minneapolis	1,213.0 (46.6)	46.6 (25.9)	257.6 (26.2)	67.4 (20.1)	298.0 (46.4)	84.7 (65.1)	295.4 (92.2)	162.5 (33.3)
Omaha	288.7 (30.2)	12.8 (7.6)	34.5 (-10.6)	23.5 (17.5)	72.6 (29.6)	26.7 (55.2)	74.7 (76.2)	43.7 (22.8)
Saint Louis	1,063.9 (18.3)	52.7 (47.6)	224.1 (-14.2)	72.7 (11.7)	254.4 (29.5)	65.1 (37.6)	255.2 (61.9)	135.8 (2.3)
Springfield	99.0 (49.5)	4.2 (16.7)	19.5 (6.0)	6.2 (29.2)	27.4 (62.1)	4.6 (76.9)	24.3 (122.9)	12.6 (40.0)
Wichita	204.3 (42.0)	9.4 (30.6)	54.9 (33.6)	9.9 (20.7)	50.1 (60.1)	10.8 (56.5)	41.2 (59.1)	24.9 (13.2)
ALL CITIES	4,012.1 (31.8)	172.9 (23.9)	777.6 (1.9)	259.2 (14.3)	1,002.1 (39.5)	283.3 (52.0)	940.5 (74.6)	568.1 (21.8)
NEBRASKA	650.3 (25.8)	26.5 (-1.5)	88.9 (4.6)	43.7 (18.4)	166.7 (24.8)	45.2 (47.7)	142.4 (61.8)	135.2 (18.3)
UNITED STATES	97,699 (32.6)	4,662 (19.9)	19,426 (1.4)	5,300 (16.7)	23,194 (45.4)	5,924 (51.6)	21,930 (78.6)	16,295 (22.2)

19.4 percent of the Plains cities employment, and 19.9 percent of the U.S. employment, which also places Omaha in a favorable position relative to the other Plains cities and the U.S.

To summarize the implications of Omaha's industry mix, the fastest growing industries make up a relatively larger portion of Omaha's total employment compared to the Plains cities and the U.S. The slowest growing industry makes up a relatively smaller share of Omaha's employment compared to the Plains cities and the U.S. Within Omaha, the fastest growing industry, services, is also the largest. These are all favorable aspects of Omaha's employment composition.

QUANTIFYING EMPLOYMENT CHANGE COMPONENTS

The "shift share" technique will be used to separate Omaha's employment change into three components in order to determine the magnitude of change attributable to (1.) Omaha's participation in the growth of the Plains economy, (2.) Omaha's industry mix, and (3.) Omaha's share of Plains cities employment.* Omaha's employment growth is compared to Plains cities growth as a standard of reference. Similar results are obtained with the U.S. as the reference, although they are not shown here.

The three components of employment change are identified in Table 2 as "Plains Cities Growth," "Industry Mix," and "Omaha Share." The Plains cities growth component shows the change in the area's employment that would have occurred from 1972 to 1985 if Omaha had grown at the same rate as all industries employment for the Plains cities. The 1972 to 1985 percent change in total nonagricultural employment for the Plains cities is applied to the 1972 employment for each industry in Omaha in order to show growth attributable to Plains growth factors.

The industry mix factor shows whether Plains cities employ-

ment in a particular industry grew faster or slower than the Plains cities all industry average. This factor will show whether Omaha's industrial mix contributed to or diminished growth in total employment. In order to calculate the industry mix factor, the difference between a particular Plains cities sector growth rate and the Plains cities all industries growth rate is applied to Omaha's 1972 employment. A positive industry mix factor signifies a relatively rapidly growing industry, whereas a negative factor indicates that an industry grew less rapidly than the Plains all industries average.

The final component, Omaha share, indicates whether employment in a particular sector for Omaha grew faster or slower than Plains employment in that sector. The difference between 1972 to 1985 growth rate of Plains employment in an industry and the growth rate for that industry in Omaha is applied to the 1972 employment in the sector in order to determine the regional share factor.

The sum of the three components equals the total change in employment from 1972 to 1985 for each sector, and the sum for all the sectors equals the change in all industries employment for Omaha. The signs of the three factors for a particular industry may be the same and mutually reinforcing or the signs may differ, indicating that the factors offset each other to some extent.

The Plains cities growth column indicates that 70,501 employees would have been added to Omaha's employment if each of Omaha's industries had grown at the same rate as total employment in the Plains cities. As we have seen, the various Plains industries did not grow at the same rate. Some Plains industries grew faster and some grew slower. Cities that had relatively more workers in fast growing industries were better off than the cities

(continued on page 6)

*For a shift share analysis of Omaha employment between 1960 and 1976, see Stepp, Vicki, "Perspectives on the Omaha Work Force," *Business in Nebraska*, 57, No. 9 (November 1977).

Review and Outlook

The physical volume index of the Bureau of Business Research expanded 0.5 percent March-to-April in real nonagricultural economic activity. Because of the unavailability of April 1986 cash farm marketings data, economic activity in the ag sector is not reported in this issue.

A strong surge in April construction activity (+3.7 percent) was mainly responsible for the gain in nonagricultural output. All other nonfarm sectors of the Nebraska economy (manufacturing, distributive, and government) registered identical 0.4 percent increases March-to-April in real output.

Prices of agricultural commodities continue their downward movement. The index of prices received by Nebraska farmers

(seasonally adjusted) declined 3.7 percent in April 1986, remaining 8.7 percent below the index level of April 1985. Nationally, the farm price index fell 1.8 percent during April 1986 and was 8.8 percent below the April 1985 index.

Dollar volume net taxable retail sales rose 4.7 percent on a year-to-year basis of comparison during April 1986 to \$776.7 million. Nonvehicle sales were up 5.1 percent (\$676.3 million), while motor vehicle sales recorded a modest increase of 1.8 percent. When inflation is taken into account, total net taxable retail sales expanded 7.0 percent during April 1986. Inflation-adjusted sales advanced more than dollar volume sales because the commodity component of the consumer price index and the motor

(continued on page 5)

Notes for Tables 1 and 2: (1) The "distributive" indicator represents a composite of wholesale and retail trade; transportation, communication and utilities; finance, insurance, and real estate; and selected services. (2) The "physical volume" indicator and its components represent the dollar volume indicator and its components adjusted for price changes using appropriate price indexes—see Table 5, page 5.

ECONOMIC INDICATORS: NEBRASKA AND UNITED STATES				
1. CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS YEAR				
April 1986	Current Month as Percent of Same Month Previous Year		1986 to date as percent of 1985 to date	
Indicator	Nebraska	U.S.	Nebraska	U.S.
Dollar Volume	na	na	na	na
Agricultural	na	na	na	na
Nonagricultural	103.2	104.0	102.8	104.7
Construction	96.4	104.3	95.7	105.4
Manufacturing	95.1	97.3	95.2	97.6
Distributive	104.3	106.0	103.7	106.8
Government	111.8	105.3	111.8	105.9
Physical Volume	na	na	na	na
Agricultural	na	na	na	na
Nonagricultural	101.1	102.8	100.0	102.4
Construction	92.5	100.1	92.1	101.6
Manufacturing	97.7	100.0	96.5	98.9
Distributive	102.6	104.3	101.0	103.9
Government	102.8	102.4	103.1	102.5
2. CHANGE FROM 1967				
April 1986	Percent of 1967 Average			
Indicator	Nebraska	U.S.		
Dollar Volume	na	na		
Agricultural	na	na		
Nonagricultural	380.0	470.6		
Construction	283.4	475.0		
Manufacturing	356.3	314.6		
Distributive	391.3	555.9		
Government	422.3	475.9		
Physical Volume	na	na		
Agricultural	na	na		
Nonagricultural	126.9	153.6		
Construction	76.6	128.4		
Manufacturing	147.3	126.8		
Distributive	120.3	170.9		
Government	153.7	153.9		

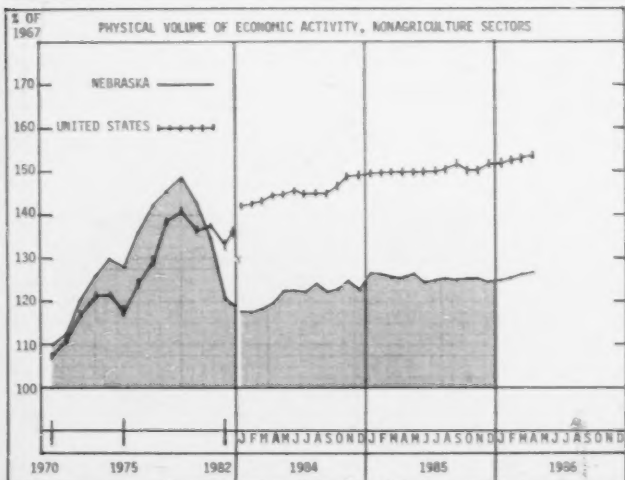
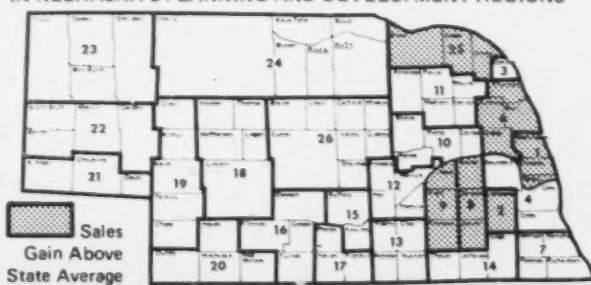
3. NET TAXABLE RETAIL SALES OF NEBRASKA REGIONS AND CITIES			
Region Number ¹ and City	City Sales ²		Sales in Region ²
	April 1986 as percent of April 1985	April 1986 as percent of April 1985	1986 to date as percent of 1985 to date
The State	105.1	104.7	104.5
1 Omaha	107.0	106.8	108.4
Bellevue	107.9		
Blair	107.4		
2 Lincoln	105.6	104.9	107.2
3 So. Sioux City	120.6	116.3	105.2
4 Nebraska City	103.5	101.1	104.3
6 Fremont	107.2	105.7	107.4
West Point	110.9		
7 Falls City	96.4	104.9	105.0
8 Seward	126.1	107.3	108.6
9 York	103.8	102.4	106.0
10 Columbus	102.2	106.3	105.0
11 Norfolk	106.1	105.8	102.3
Wayne	117.6		
12 Grand Island	101.8	100.1	100.6
13 Hastings	101.4	104.3	104.4
14 Beatrice	101.3	102.6	104.2
Fairbury	104.7		
15 Kearney	104.8	104.0	103.5
16 Lexington	97.6	96.2	95.7
17 Holdrege	92.4	94.0	97.1
18 North Platte	102.0	102.1	103.8
19 Ogallala	93.3	91.6	95.6
20 McCook	110.7	105.6	102.8
21 Sidney	103.8	93.5	92.3
Kimball	77.2		
22 Scottsbluff/Gering	100.3	100.5	102.7
23 Alliance	105.9	102.0	99.0
Chadron	108.6		
24 O'Neill	97.2	101.0	101.0
25 Hartington	118.2	108.5	108.0
26 Broken Bow	98.0	96.7	101.1

¹ See region map below.

² Sales on which sales taxes are collected by retailers located in the state. Region totals include motor vehicle sales; city totals exclude motor vehicle sales.

Compiled from data provided by Nebraska Department of Revenue.

1986 YEAR TO DATE AS PERCENT OF 1985 YEAR TO DATE IN NEBRASKA'S PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REGIONS



(continued from page 4)

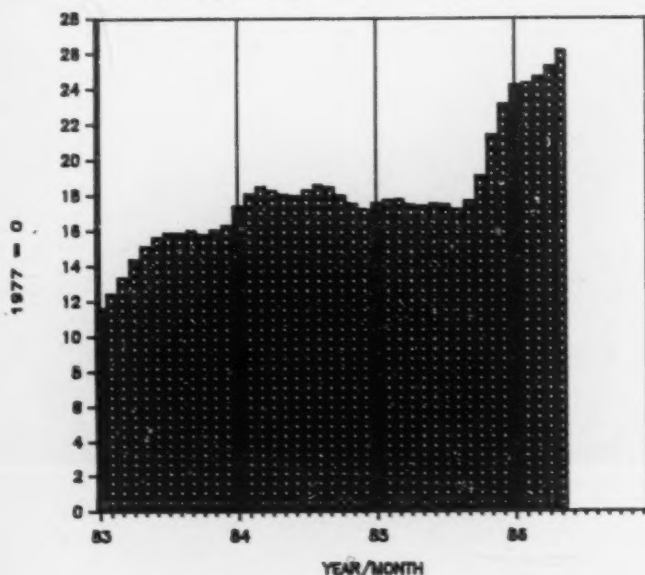
vehicle price index both declined in April 1986 compared to index levels of April 1985.

Compared to April 1985 business activity, nineteen of twenty-six cities listed by the Bureau of Business Research registered positive changes in business activity during April 1986. Seward and South Sioux City, with soaring retail sales gains (over 20 percent), led the list of cities with business activity expansions of 17.4 percent and 16.8 percent, respectively. Sizable April advances in building activity elevated Falls City (+12.1 percent) and Broken Bow (+10.6 percent) toward the top of the list of Nebraska cities with positive changes in business activity. The Lincoln and Omaha business activity indexes both increased 5.1 percent. The state gain in business activity was 3.9 percent.

Nebraska's composite index of leading indicators rose 0.7 percent in May, representing the ninth consecutive monthly increase in the index. May's increase was the strongest since January and points to the likelihood of continued growth in the state's economy during the remainder of 1986.

The growth in May's leading index primarily was due to an 8.7 percent gain in the residential construction component. Overall, four of the five components of the leading index improved in May.

Nebraska Composite Leading Index



CHARLES L. BARE and JEROME A. DEICHERT

5. PRICE INDEXES

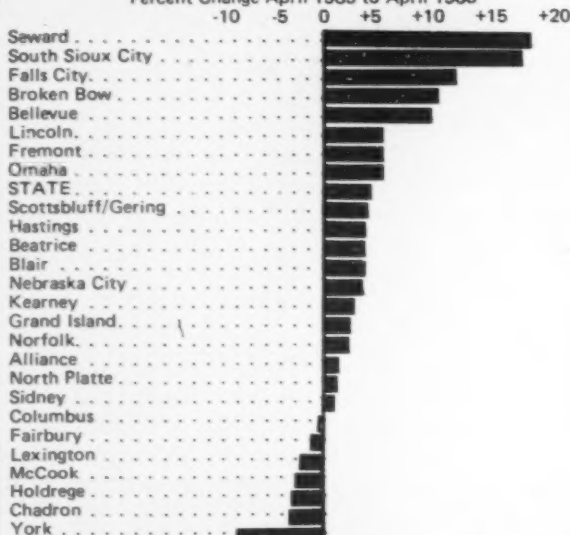
April 1986	Index (1967 = 100)	Percent of Same Month Last Year	Year to Date as Percent of Same Period Last Year*
Consumer Prices	325.3	101.6	102.7
Commodity component	281.2	98.0	100.3
Wholesale Prices	297.9	96.3	98.0
Agricultural Prices			
United States	219.0	91.2	90.9
Nebraska	210.0	91.3	91.2

*Using arithmetic average of monthly indexes.

Sources: Consumer and Wholesale Prices: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; Agricultural Prices: U.S. Department of Agriculture.

CITY BUSINESS INDEX

Percent Change April 1985 to April 1986



Source: Table 3 (page 4) and Table 4 below.

4. April 1986

CITY BUSINESS INDICATORS

The State and Its Trading Centers	Percent of Same Month a Year Ago		
	Employment ¹	Building Activity ²	Power Consumption ³
The State	102.4	91.9	95.9
Alliance	99.6	62.9	98.5*
Beatrice	100.8	132.3	96.5
Bellevue	102.3	236.8	86.3
Blair	102.2	64.8	90.5*
Broken Bow	101.6	782.1	105.6
Chadron	104.6	9.3	108.5
Columbus	101.5	53.9	100.3
Fairbury	103.2	28.2	97.0
Falls City	101.7	1,228.5	91.9
Fremont	103.8	85.7	77.0*
Grand Island	102.4	87.2	78.3
Hastings	102.6	111.4	NA
Holdrege	100.6	68.4	98.8
Kearney	102.5	70.3	95.9
Lexington	101.9	49.3	80.7
Lincoln	102.7	110.2	96.7
McCook	103.9	10.0	97.7
Nebraska City	101.3	100.8	105.3*
Norfolk	102.7	54.2	109.2
North Platte	101.7	69.3	99.7
Omaha	102.3	98.9	94.9
Scottsbluff/Gering	102.8	127.9	75.5
Seward	102.2	214.1	102.8
Sidney	102.4	53.8	104.5
So. Sioux City	105.4	239.7	98.0
York	100.9	8.0	93.6

¹As a proxy for city employment, total employment for the county in which a city is located is used.

²Building Activity is the value of building permits issued as spread over an appropriate time period of construction. The U.S. Department of Commerce Composite Construction Cost Index is used to adjust construction activity for price changes.

³Power Consumption is a combined index of consumption of electricity and natural gas except in cases marked * for which only one is used.

Source: Compilation by Bureau of Business Research from reports of private and public agencies.

TABLE 2
Disaggregation of Omaha Employment Change: 1972 to 1985

Industry	Omaha Employment Changes Related to:				Total Change
	Omaha 1972 Employment	Plains Cities Growth	Industry Mix	Omaha Share	
Construction	11,900	3,784	-935	-1,949	900
Manufacturing	38,600	12,275	-11,553	-4,821	-4,099
Transportation, Communication, and Utilities	20,000	6,360	-3,502	642	3,500
Trade	56,000	17,808	4,340	-5,550	16,598
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	17,200	5,470	3,471	559	9,500
Services	42,400	13,483	18,143	674	32,300
Government	35,600	11,321	-3,567	345	8,099
TOTAL	221,700	70,501	6,396	-10,099	66,798

where the slow growing industries accounted for a relatively large share of total employment. The industry mix column shows the effects on Omaha's employment due to the different rates of growth in the Plains industries. Those industries that grew more slowly in the Plains cities than the area's total employment have a negative sign, while the relatively fast growing industries have a positive sign. If Omaha's industry mix were the same as the Plains, the effect shown in the last row of the industry mix column would be zero. Instead, we see that Omaha benefitted by a gain of 6,393 employees due to its favorable industry mix.

For some industries, Omaha's employment grew faster than employment in the corresponding Plains sector. Other Omaha industries grew more slowly. The Omaha share column quantifies the impact of differential rates of growth on employment. If each of Omaha's industries grew at the same rate as the corresponding Plains industry, the total effect of the share component (last row) would be zero. We see that the decrease in Omaha's manufacturing employment and Omaha's slower trade employment growth (compared to the Plains cities) were the major contributors to the negative share component. Caution is warranted in interpreting this result. As we saw earlier, Omaha's total employment growth has outperformed the Plains cities in four of the last five years. This indicates that the share component is negative due to events prior to 1981.

SUMMARY

The following are the most important points of this study:

Between 1972 and 1985, Omaha's employment increased 30.2 percent, which is just less than the Plains cities (31.8 percent) and the U.S. (32.6 percent) rates.

Omaha's total employment growth record has bettered the Plains cities in four of the last five years, and its gains for the last three years well exceeded its annual 1972 to 1985 average growth of just over two percent.

Omaha's growth in the service sector (76.2 percent) was more than two and one-half times its total employment growth rate (30.2 percent), while growth in finance, insurance, and real estate (55.2 percent) also far exceeded its overall rate.

With regards to Omaha's industry mix, the fastest growing industries in the Plains cities and the U.S. make up a relatively larger portion of Omaha's total employment compared to the Plains cities and the U.S. The slowest growing industry makes up a relatively smaller share of Omaha's employment compared to the Plains cities and the U.S. Within Omaha, the fastest growing industry, service, is also the largest. These are all favorable aspects of Omaha's employment composition.

Omaha's performance in the manufacturing and trade sectors between 1972 and 1985 compared unfavorably with the Plains cities and were the primary contributors to the negative share component that was estimated. Since Omaha's total employment growth outperformed the Plains cities in four of the last five years, this result is primarily due to events prior to 1981.

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